SAALT Declines to Attend Today's Department of Justice Hate Crimes Summit

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on behalf of
Lakshmi Sridaran <lakshmi@saalt.org>

Thu 6/29/2017 12:00 PM

To:masa-organizing@googlegroups.com <masa-organizing@googlegroups.com>

Hi Everyone,

Below, please find SAALT's statement on today's Department of Justice Hate Crimes Summit.

Thank you,
Lakshmi

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SOUTH ASIAN AMERICANS LEADING TOGETHER

Strengthening South Asian Communities in America

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 29, 2017

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SAALT Declines to Attend Today's Department of Justice Hate Crimes Summit

South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT), a national civil rights and racial justice organization, will not participate in today's Hate Crimes Summit organized by the U.S. Department of Justice due to the Trump Administration's ongoing efforts to disregard and undermine the civil rights of all Americans, regardless of our appearance, how we pray, or where we were born. Illustrating a continued denial of civil rights on the part of the current Administration, today marks the first day that partial implementation of the Muslim Ban resumes after the Supreme Court's announcement earlier this week.

SAALT and other invited organizations for today's Summit learned only 36 hours ago that Attorney General Jeff Sessions will provide opening remarks this morning and will not answer questions from press or attendees. Given that this serves as a photo opportunity, we are not convinced the Summit will be a forum for substantive dialogue. Combating hate violence is central to SAALT's mission, and we have been deeply committed to developing solutions that stem the tide of violence targeting South Asian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Arab, and Middle Eastern

Americans since our inception.

Furthermore, SAALT is profoundly disturbed by the infrastructure this Administration has created to combat hate crimes. Established in a February 9 executive order, the Department of Justice's Task Force on Crime Reduction and Public Safety has made it a top priority to criminalize undocumented immigrants. Unconscionably, the Department of Justice has embedded a "Hate Crimes Subcommittee" into this taskforce, equating the criminality of perpetrators of hate violence with those who are undocumented.

Among their many transgressions, this Department of Justice has deeply undermined the trust that is foundational for communities to feel comfortable reporting hate crimes to law enforcement. From issuing and repeatedly appealing an unconstitutional Muslim Ban to publically supporting Texas' draconian state immigration enforcement law, SB 4, to rolling back police accountability measures, this Administration has broadcast a very clear message to all of our communities. Given this reality, we believe that the Attorney General's remarks and the subsequent discussion today will only amount to window dressing.

South Asian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Middle Eastern, and Arab Americans are experiencing levels of hate violence not seen since the year after 9/11. In the seven months since the 2016 presidential election SAALT has documented 104 incidents of violence against our communities. We believe discriminatory government policies, executive orders, and litigation have actively contributed to the very rise in hate violence that the Department of Justice will attempt to discuss today.

SAALT has a long and successful history of engagement with the Department of Justice on behalf of our communities across numerous administrations. However, the current Department of Justice continues to be at the center of policies that criminalize our communities. We have worked with our allies within and outside government for over fifteen years to improve policies on reporting and investigating hate crimes. SAALT remains deeply committed to being rooted in community and building our power with everyone impacted by the rising tide of violence in our nation. We will continue to fight the discriminatory policies, executive orders, and litigation coming out of this Administration.

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South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT) is a national, nonpartisan, non-profit organization that elevates the voices and perspectives of South Asian individuals and organizations to build a more just and inclusive society in the United States. SAALT is the coordinating entity of the **National Coalition of South Asian Organizations (NCSO)**, a network of 58 organizations that serve, organize, and advocate on behalf of the South Asian community across the country.

SAALT relies on your financial support to advocate on behalf of the South Asian community nationwide. Please consider making a donation today. An investment in SAALT is an investment in

South Asian rights. We are a 501c (3) non-profit organization.

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